

War Veterans' Allowance Act

veterans affairs committee and raise the single veteran's ceiling to \$1,200 and the married to \$2,000. However, we are happy to see the ceiling raised to the extent it is.

I was particularly glad to note when the minister gave his explanation that he indicated that, as was the practice in the past, casual earnings would not be included in finding the total ceiling. The Legion has asked for that, and has requested an exemption of \$9,000 for the veteran's equity in his house. The bill provides for \$8,000. I do think the government could have gone that extra \$1,000. I do not know why they stopped at \$8,000 and did not provide for a \$9,000 equity in a house. However there again I was very glad to hear the explanation from the minister that the \$8,000 is not necessarily the real value of the house but that it represents either the veteran's equity in the house or the assessed value and I think it will be of great benefit to many veterans in this country.

There is one group in Canada to which I was sorry thought had not been given when these amendments were being considered and that is our merchant seamen. In that respect I want to read briefly from a most recent brief because I think it puts the case very well indeed for the merchant seamen. Consideration of this group has come up before the veterans affairs committee on a number of occasions in past years and there are many people in this country who fail to realize the service that many of these men rendered to Canada during the war. However, because they served in the merchant service, with the exception of certain rehabilitation and education credits and things of that sort, they did not receive the general benefits of the veterans charter. I am one who still believes that consideration should be given to their case and I think it is particularly appropriate that consideration be given in the first instance to an amendment to this act. On that account I will read from page 28 of the brief presented to the Prime Minister of Canada and the cabinet by the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League in November 1957 as follows:

Earlier representations for veterans' benefits for merchant seamen have always been primarily concerned with rehabilitation benefits such as re-establishment credits, educational training, etc., rather than with war veterans allowance. We believe, bearing in mind the desperate situation of some of these men who had excellent war service both on the high seas and, in some instances, on the landing beaches, that at this time the arguments advanced against providing any benefits, namely, that they receive more pay than members of the armed forces, might be considered balanced out against the rehabilitation benefits that the other veterans receive. We believe that these veterans should be granted war veterans allowance so that the country for whom they ran

great risks in time of war might not leave them and their families in dire poverty when they are no longer able to provide for themselves.

I heartily agree with the representations of the Canadian Legion in this respect. The brief goes on to say:

The Canadian Legion therefore recommends that the War Veterans' Allowance Act be amended to include these veterans of the merchant navy and the T.124 service.

I do urge the minister and the government to give further consideration to these representations of the Legion on behalf of the merchant seamen because I know personally, although their numbers are not large, there are some of these men who would benefit materially from assistance under this act.

Now I would like to say a word or two on a matter which I raised previously. I think everyone will appreciate the amendment in the bill providing for six months absence from Canada annually for the veteran in receipt of war veterans allowance. This puts him on the same basis as a person in receipt of old age security. I do however, feel that consideration should particularly be given to those veterans who find it necessary to leave Canada on account of their health. I mentioned one such case the other day but I will mention it again. I am speaking of a man who was advised by the doctor who was in charge of his case to go to Mexico because of a serious lung condition so that he might alleviate the suffering which he would have to experience for the rest of his days. This veteran had to go to Mexico and did go to Mexico and later died in Mexico, but of course was unable to receive the war veterans allowance.

I do think that if the government does not see fit to make the allowance payable to veterans who wish to go out of Canada generally it should give further consideration to the payment of an allowance to the veteran who has to leave this country on account of his health when he has a medical certificate from the medical officer of the department to this effect. I am urging this further consideration because of the tragic circumstances in cases such as the one I have mentioned and from time to time there must be quite a few such cases across the country.

I would like to bring a further matter to the attention of the minister or his parliamentary assistant, who I most sincerely congratulate. You know it is very hard to get used to looking at a person full-face when you have been looking at his profile for so many years but I am very glad he has received the appointment and I know he will do a good job. Now I want to get my amendment in.

[Mr. Herridge.]